

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
TO H.R. 918  
OFFERED BY MR. COFFMAN OF COLORADO**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2       This Act may be cited as the “Veteran Urgent Access  
3 to Mental Healthcare Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF INITIAL AND URGENT MENTAL**  
5                   **HEALTH CARE FOR CERTAIN FORMER MEM-**  
6                   **BERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.**

7       (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 of title 38, United  
8 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1720H  
9 the following new section:

10 **“§ 1720I. Provision of initial and urgent mental**  
11                   **health care for certain former members**  
12                   **not otherwise eligible for care**

13       “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall furnish to  
14 former members of the Armed Forces described in sub-  
15 section (b)—

16                   “(1) an initial mental health assessment; and

17                   “(2) the mental health care services authorized  
18       under this chapter that the Secretary determines are

1 required to treat the urgent mental health care  
2 needs of the former member, including risk of sui-  
3 cide or harming others.

4 “(b) FORMER MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES  
5 DESCRIBED.—A former member of the Armed Forces de-  
6 scribed in this subsection is an individual who meets the  
7 following criteria:

8 “(1) The individual is a former member of the  
9 Armed Forces, including the reserve components,  
10 who—

11 “(A) served in the active military, naval, or  
12 air service, and was discharged or released  
13 therefrom under a condition that is not honor-  
14 able except—

15 “(i) dishonorable; or

16 “(ii) bad conduct discharge;

17 “(B) has applied for a character of service  
18 determination and such determination has not  
19 been made; and

20 “(C) is not otherwise eligible to enroll in  
21 the health care system established by section  
22 1705 of this title by reason of such discharge  
23 or release not meeting the requirements of sec-  
24 tion 101(2) of this title.

25 “(2) While serving in the Armed Forces—

1           “(A) the former member was deployed in a  
2 theater of combat operations or an area at a  
3 time during which hostilities occurred in that  
4 area;

5           “(B) participated in or experienced such  
6 combat operations or hostilities, including by  
7 controlling an unmanned aerial vehicle from a  
8 location other than such theater or area; or

9           “(C) was the victim of a physical assault  
10 of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature,  
11 or sexual harassment (as defined in section  
12 1720D(f) of this title).

13       “(c) NON-DEPARTMENT CARE.—(1) In furnishing  
14 mental health care services to an individual under this sec-  
15 tion, the Secretary may provide such mental health care  
16 services at a non-Department facility if—

17           “(A) in the judgment of a mental health profes-  
18 sional employed by the Department, the receipt of  
19 mental health care services by that individual in fa-  
20 cilities of the Department would be clinically inadvis-  
21 able; or

22           “(B) facilities of the Department are not capa-  
23 ble of furnishing such mental health care services to  
24 that individual economically because of geographical  
25 inaccessibility.

1       “(2) The Secretary shall carry out paragraph (1) pur-  
2 suant to section 1703 of this title or any other provision  
3 of law authorizing the Secretary to enter into contracts  
4 or agreements to furnish hospital care and medical serv-  
5 ices to veterans at non-Department facilities.

6       “(d) SETTING AND REFERRALS.—In furnishing men-  
7 tal health care services to an individual under this section,  
8 the Secretary shall—

9           “(1) seek to ensure that such mental health  
10 care services are furnished in a setting that is thera-  
11apeutically appropriate, taking into account the cir-  
12cumstances that resulted in the need for such men-  
13tal health care services; and

14           “(2) provide referral services to assist former  
15 members who are not eligible for services under this  
16 chapter to obtain services from sources outside the  
17 Department.

18       “(e) INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall provide in-  
19 formation on the mental health care services available  
20 under this section. Efforts by the Secretary to provide  
21 such information—

22           “(1) shall include availability of a toll-free tele-  
23 phone number (commonly referred to as an 800  
24 number);

1           “(2) shall ensure that information about the  
2           mental health care services available under this sec-  
3           tion—

4                   “(A) is revised and updated as appro-  
5                   priate;

6                   “(B) is made available and visibly posted  
7                   at appropriate facilities of the Department; and

8                   “(C) is made available through appropriate  
9                   public information services; and

10           “(3) shall include coordination with the Sec-  
11           retary of Defense seeking to ensure that members of  
12           the Armed Forces and individuals who are being  
13           separated from active military, naval, or air service  
14           are provided appropriate information about pro-  
15           grams, requirements, and procedures for applying  
16           for mental health care services under this section.

17           “(f) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Each year, the Secretary  
18           shall submit to Congress an annual report on the mental  
19           health care services provided pursuant to this section.  
20           Each report shall include data for the year covered by the  
21           report with respect to each of the following:

22                   “(1) The number of individuals who received  
23                   mental health care services under subsection (a),  
24                   disaggregated by the number of men who received

1 such services and the number of women who re-  
2 ceived such services.

3 “(2) Such other information as the Secretary  
4 considers appropriate.”.

5 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
6 at the beginning of chapter 17 of title 38, United States  
7 Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to  
8 section 1720H the following new item:

“1720I. Provision of initial and urgent mental health care not otherwise eligible  
for care.”.

9 (c) STUDY ON EFFECT OF COMBAT SERVICE ON SUI-  
10 CIDE RATES.—

11 (1) STUDY.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs,  
12 in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall  
13 seek to enter into a contract with an independent  
14 nongovernmental entity to carry out a study on the  
15 effect combat service has had on suicide rates and  
16 serious mental health issues among veterans. To the  
17 extent practicable, such study shall—

18 (A) compare the rate and method of sui-  
19 cides among veterans who have received mental  
20 health care services from the Veterans Health  
21 Administration and veterans who have not re-  
22 ceived such services from the Veterans Health  
23 Administration; and

1 (B) compare the rate and method of sui-  
2 cides and the incidence of serious mental health  
3 issues among veterans who have served in com-  
4 bat and veterans who have not served in com-  
5 bat.

6 (2) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the  
7 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of  
8 Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report  
9 containing the study conducted under paragraph (1).

10 **SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF REQUIREMENT FOR COLLECTION**  
11 **OF FEES FOR HOUSING LOANS GUARANTEED**  
12 **BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

13 Section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code,  
14 is amended—

15 (1) in subparagraph (A)—

16 (A) in clause (iii), by striking “September  
17 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
18 and

19 (B) in clause (iv), by striking “September  
20 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;

21 (2) in subparagraph (B)—

22 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September  
23 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
24 and

1 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September  
2 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
3 (3) in subparagraph (C)—

4 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September  
5 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
6 and

7 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September  
8 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
9 and  
10 (4) in subparagraph (D)—

11 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September  
12 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”;  
13 and

14 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September  
15 30, 2024” and inserting “December 31, 2024”.

16 **SEC. 4. CHARACTER OF SERVICE DETERMINATIONS.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 53 of title 38, United  
18 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 5303A  
19 the following new section:

20 **“§ 5303B. Character of service determinations**

21 “(a) DETERMINATION.—The Secretary shall estab-  
22 lish a process by which an individual who served in the  
23 Armed Forces and was discharged or dismissed therefrom  
24 may seek a determination from the Secretary with respect  
25 to whether such discharge or release was under a condition



1 that bars the right of such individual to a benefit under  
2 the laws administered by the Secretary based upon the pe-  
3 riod of service from which discharged or dismissed.

4 “(b) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—If the Secretary  
5 determines under subsection (a) that an individual is  
6 barred to a benefit under the laws administered by the  
7 Secretary, the Secretary shall provide to such individual  
8 information regarding the ability of the individual to ad-  
9 dress such condition, including pursuant to section 5303  
10 of this title and chapter 79 of title 10.”.

11 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
12 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting  
13 after the item relating to section 5303A the following new  
14 item:

“5303B. Character of service determinations.”.

